



Converting the IO Concept into Reality

by Captain Eric Guenther and Captain Gary Schreckengost

The 1st Squadron, 104th Cavalry, 28th Infantry Division, Pennsylvania Army National Guard, was tasked to stand up a task force for the stabilization forces in Bosnia, which included an information operations (IO) section (S7).

Whether you are in the artillery, armor, cavalry, or infantry branch, there is no organic duty skill identifier for information operations. We were directed by an artillery officer to establish an information operations function because it is a key force multiplier in conducting stability operations and support operations.

We read U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 100-6, *Information Operations*, and FM 3-13, *Information Operations: Doctrine, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures*.¹ Although they provide some good general information, actual hands-on training products were lacking. The intent of this article is to help battalion-level officers better facilitate IO at their level by:

- Defining what IO are and how they manifest at the battalion level.
- Recognizing the synergy between IO and artillery and imbedding the function in the armor battalion, infantry battalion, or cavalry squadron as a force multiplier.

- Summarizing current doctrine and synthesizing it with some of our own experiences.
- Offering a hands-on system for battalion-level officers.
- Relating many of the implied tasks in building IO — to help convert IO essential fire support tasks (EFSTs) into measurable essential field artillery tasks (EFATs).

According to FM 3-13, *Information Operations: Doctrine, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures*, “Information is an element of combat power. IO is one means to that end. Focused IO — when synchronized with effective information management and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance — enables commanders to gain information superiority. IO is a prime means for achieving superiority.”²

Information and shaping operations are command functions at all levels. At the battalion level, this includes the commander down to the squad leader. IO is what drives the mission in stability operations and support operations, and as such, is an all-encompassing concept. The key to IO, like artillery, then, is in identifying and articulating targets and

calculating how to make them move in a particular direction or assume an attitude that we want. IO is all about gaining and retaining the initiative and in focusing the maneuver element’s efforts in achieving the desired endstate.

With today’s geometric proliferation of assets, especially lethal, such as mortars, cannons, rockets, or close-air support with multiple projectile combinations, and to a lesser extent, nonlethal, such as IO and psychological operations, officers must become better effects managers or planners. As such, IO will be a critical component to successful stability operations and support operations and must be thoroughly diffused throughout the commander’s scheme of maneuver and its effects fully calculated beforehand.

IO at the battalion level manifests itself in many different ways. In short, IO is planning and executing interactions with the indigenous population to achieve the stated mission or reach an endstate by synchronizing multiple nonlethal assets. IO are therefore critical components of operations, plain and simple. It’s just like firing a round to affect the behavior or attitude of targets. For example, if you say “x” to a person, he will do this, if you say “y,” he will do that. As such, it must be

fully integrated into the scheme of maneuver. Not only did we provide talking points or television and radio scripts to soldiers, but we also calculated the effects of a patrol's force-protection posture as it delivered a specific message. What soldiers or squad leaders said while on patrol sent certain messages to the civilian population. These messages were calculated in advance because they did effect management or abatement.

IO Staff Section (S7)

The IO staff section at the battalion level exists to help the commander facilitate information or shaping operations within his area of responsibility (AOR) with nonlethal assets, and to act as a conduit with higher headquarters. In our task force, the IO was a separate and distinct entity, the S7, which was intricately connected with the S2 and S3. If your commander does not feel comfortable with this arrangement, the IO should be a subset of the S3 as it is a form of operations. Nevertheless, IO should be *fully integrated* with all components of operations. It was therefore our yeoman task to train ourselves in implementing IO and diffusing its vagaries throughout the entire command. It was also on us to develop a workable nonlethal targeting system and an EFST to EFAT conversion plan with sensible measures of effectiveness (MOE) for the task force virtually from scratch.

At first, the S7 consisted of two artillery officers and two noncommissioned officers (NCO) from the cavalry squadron. Once we arrived in theater, at the behest of our predecessors, we decided to split the section into an S7 proper and a public affairs office (PAO), both working together and answering the needs of the commander. We did this because the PAO is a critical component of IO execution and without a separate section, the S7 would have lacked the planning/targeting focus that was necessary to help the commander accomplish the mission. Our public affairs section also included a host-country national who knew the lay of the land and really helped in getting our focused messages out without compromising the S7's security concerns.

Because IO is such a critical component to stability operations and support operations, each task force should have one captain and one senior NCO to man the S7 section, one lieutenant and junior NCO to run the PAO section, and one lieutenant and one mid-level NCO to support each company in implementing IO tasks. Our troop commanders were often overwhelmed with planning and implementing IO tasks, as we had no

dedicated support staff at those levels. If there is a shortage of IO officers, then XO's should be trained in IO and assume the role of the IO officer at their appropriate levels. Nonetheless, the S7 should have command of the English language, be creative and flexible, and be somewhat experienced in targeting methodology.

Key IO (S7) staff tasks include:

- Planning, coordinating, and directing the overall IO effort.
- Developing IO plans with the commander's intent to support the concept of the operations and achieve the desired endstate.
- Developing IO objectives and tasks.
- Developing IO requirements and recommending IO-related commander's critical information requirements (CCIR).
- Determine availability of IO resources, such as psychological operations (PSYOP), and synchronize their effects to achieve the desired endstate.
- Synchronizing, coordinating, and deconflicting IO task planning.
- Synchronizing IO with the overall operation.
- Coordinating IO with higher and lower echelons.
- Nominating IO targets and developing a method of engagement.
- Facilitating the battalion's targeting meeting and/or IO work group.

- Preparing IO products, including operations orders (OPORD), talking points, and targeting synchronization matrices (TSM).
- Conducting IO training throughout the battalion.
- Assessing IO throughout the AOR and modifying plans as required. The S7 should do this by "getting out of the wire" and seeing how the IO plan is being executed at the squad, platoon, or company levels.

Nesting With Higher

As in fire planning, IO revolves around top-down planning and bottom-up refinement. At the battalion level, you will be assigned IO tasks or focus areas from higher headquarters that are tied to strategic or operational endstates. Think of IO tasks as EFSTs. The IO endstate also drove our mission statement, which was no doubt developed at the J-level and was then diffused down to the battalion level through the chain of command. An example of an stability operations and support operations mission statement, especially in its later-phases could be: "Task Force conducts stability operations and support operations in the AOR to deter hostilities, cooperates with the international community to develop self-sufficient institutions, and contributes to a safe and secure environment, eliminating the need for peacekeepers." Each word was deliberately chosen to help focus our effects. For example, "contributes" denotes a partnership with the host coun-



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try and not sole responsibility. And the last statement, "eliminating the need for peacekeepers," must be held into account when every mission is planned and all effects are calculated to achieve that ultimate goal or endstate.

As we executed the mission in theater, we received refinements at the beginning of each month at the information operations work group (IOWG), which was a brigade- or division-level operation. Once received, we nested our operations at the battalion level by converting the EFSTs into more specific IO tasks that can be likened to EFATs. For example, higher headquarters could give the following focus areas or IO tasks that supported the mission statement: "conducts stability operations and support operations in the AOR to deter hostilities, cooperates with the international community to develop self-sufficient institutions, and contributes to a safe and secure environment, eliminating the need for peacekeepers:

- T1: Conduct meetings with officials in areas affected by restructuring and troop realignments.
- T2: Use patrols and radio shows in affected areas to inform populace about any visible effects of the restructuring.
- T3: Inform the local populace of the limited role and capabilities of certain UN agencies."

Once these focus areas were received, it was the S7's job to help begin the military decisionmaking process (MDMP)

by assisting the commander and the rest of the staff in converting these IO tasks into specific EFATs by using the decide, detect, deliver, and assess (D3A) artillery methodology. For example, to support the above tasks, our battalion determined which specific targets, people, or institutions should be engaged in our AOR by using D3A to achieve the desired effect. We also chose which asset would best service the target, such as squad leader, troop commander, squadron commander, PSYOP team, civil affairs (CA) team, or radio show, and used talking points from the brigade PAO by converting them into a tool that local commanders could better use in the form of an appendix to the battalion OPORD. All of this coordination, planning, and brain storming was done at our battalion targeting meeting, which was held once a week, several days after the IOWG.

Targeting Meeting

Our targeting meeting was a critical component to our success. The meeting was facilitated by the S7, chaired by the task force commander, and was fastidiously attended by our troop commanders, the S2, S3, and S5, the PAO, the PSYOP team NCO, the chaplain, and judge advocate general, when available. The team meeting's principle function was to ensure that our efforts were synergized to achieve desired endstates and that they were nested with the EFSTs, which were converted into workable EFATs. The meeting started by assessing last week's targets (week minus one), and

discussing whether effects were achieved and if retargeting was required. Once assessments were completed, the S2 gave his intelligence brief to ensure that the IO campaign at our level was still relevant. The commander then restated the mission and gave his intent for week zero (coming week) targeting refinements. Once that was completed, we entered the most important phase, week-plus-one, or planning week, where the commander told us where he wanted to go and whether the EFSTs from the IOWG were reinforced or introduced by the S7.

Again, the key to the team meeting was in nesting with higher command levels and calculating all effects to ensure that they led the targets toward the desired endstate, as articulated in the mission statement. The S7's primary responsibility, whether at the S, G, or J level, is to help the commander articulate and calculate effects and focus all of his efforts to achieve the desired endstate.

Once the meeting concluded, the S7 completed the TSM for official publication and created an annex P that included appendices such as talking points and radio scripts. He then sent this information to higher headquarters to ensure that all week-plus-one targets were cleared and that the effects of week-minus-one were accurately recorded, analyzed, and contextualized.

Refinement

After our TSM was published, the S7 once again attended the IOWG at brigade and the process started over. As such, we had an IOWG and a team meeting once a week. Brigade compiled all of the task forces' week-minus-one assessments, made a collective conclusion, and offered any adjustments to their published EFSTs. The task forces then shared their plans for weeks zero and plus-one. The brigade ensured that efforts were not duplicated and offered reinforcement to the main effort. As such, D3A was a continuous, weekly process. When a new month started, the same methods were used again.

Implementation and Determining Measure of Effectiveness

The most challenging part of IO at the battalion level is implementation. The bottom line is that if your battalion is tasked to conduct stability operations and support operations, train your commanders, staff, platoon leaders, and squad leaders how to negotiate, use talking points,

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and how to use IO as a concept early and often — IO or nonlethal engagements will be your primary asset. Although little information was available during the train-up phase of our stability operations and support operations mission, we developed and trained on negotiation scenarios with squad leaders and above when we could. When we got into theater, therefore, the men were confident in building relationships with the local leaders and gauging effects, further capitalizing on our predecessors.

Determining measurable IO effects was also difficult. Our advice is not to get too wrapped around the axle, as it will come in time. We converted traditional IO tasks, such as influence, encourage, promote, divert, warn, or isolate into measurable effects by using educational objectives, such as compare and contrast, explain, or identify as measures of effectiveness. The use of psychology, and not mathematics, was the best way to measure nonlethal engagements. For example, a task could be to persuade a local official to help facilitate a weapons harvest (a program to encourage the population to turn in weapons and ordnance left over from the war) by providing police support and by offering guidance where to go and what would best work. A possible effect or measure of effectiveness would be that the target agreed and offered at least some police support, and

was able to understand why it was important to get involved in the harvest. If all of these were met, then the target was coded green and no further targeting was required. If it was less than, then we coded it amber for retargeting. If none were met, then we coded it red, reengaged the target with another asset, or chose another target to achieve the EFST.

Case Study

Like most other stability operations and support operations, you may be ordered to conduct a weapons harvest to help ensure a safe and secure environment. Sticking with the mission statement of, “conducts stability operations and support operations in the AOR to deter hostilities, cooperates with the international community to develop self-sufficient institutions, and contributes to a safe and secure environment, eliminating the need for peacekeepers,” here are some examples of some EFSTs that may be assigned at the IOWG by brigade or higher:

- T1: plan, prepare, and execute weapons harvest operations within the AOR IAW the provided timeline.
- T2: meet with local government leaders, police officials, and secure their support.
- T3: conduct planning and coordination with local government officials, including the police, to develop work-



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able timetables and programs for a successful harvest operation.

- T4: Encourage local authorities to participate in talk shows and other joint forums to promote the harvest program.

With these EFSTs in hand, we converted them into measurable EFATs at our targeting meeting and began the MDMP by determining high payoff targets, such as the mayor, the police station, the institution, and the township. The staff then completed its initial estimate and continued through the MDMP until the commander was briefed. Once the general concept was approved by the squadron commander, the troop commanders and the squadron staff began to select specific targets. We decided to invite local leaders on post to co-opt their support and share our EFSTs, thus giving them ownership of the process, which nests with the mission statement, “contributes to a safe and secure environment, eliminating the need for peacekeepers.” We also invited the local press to announce the program and to show our partnership with the local institutions. The effects of such meetings, of course, were wargamed at the team meeting. Once the local leaders were co-opted, the squads began to distribute PSYOP products to business owners, the police, local leaders, and the targeted populace. We even developed our own symbol, based on one of Ben Franklin’s 1747 Pennsylvania Militia motifs, of two men shaking hands, one with the sleeves of a businessman (the local population) and the other with camouflage (the peacekeeper) to show partner-



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ship. The symbol was transposed by PSY-OP, duplicated, and then affixed to each harvest vehicle. Our soldiers also conducted radio shows with local leaders and worked closely with the local police by using talking points. For example, the PAO escorted the local press to highlight and congratulate local leaders, while brigade assets announced the harvest. We also had a local television station create a commercial that would best reach the targeted population.

Throughout the harvest, which lasted a full month, we refined our target lists on a weekly, if not daily, basis in concert with the squad and platoon leaders and the company commanders. We also tasked our assigned PSYOP team to study a post-harvest area to ensure that our message was being properly delivered. If it was not, we made adjustments for the next municipality.

At a tactical level, the stability operations and support operations environment is not the typical battlefield scenario. However, it is a hazardous environment — the transition between combat and social stability — and is best handled by trained combatants prepared to respond. During stability operations and support operations, there remains a need for traditional combat arms branches, such as armor, cavalry, infantry, and artillery, because effective peacekeeping must always be buttressed by heavy firepower. That said, the primary difference between peace-making and peacekeeping is the need for deadly force in the former and the need for more subtle coercion in the latter. A battalion or company commander who takes the field knowing he has the support of artillery gains confidence from the knowledge that he is fighting with an advantage. The same holds true for the commander who has IO support in the stability operations and support operations environment. Advantage is what IO brings to this unique battlefield and it is why great effort must be made to develop the IO plan, train the right people who can handle what had formerly been considered noncombatant responsibilities (or not considered at all), and to incorporate the plan and the people into the implementation process. In short, any branch officer can be an S7 or an IO facilitator at his appropriate level, if he has the training and acumen to fill such a role.

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io, you deal with individuals and groups of individuals. The IO team must be fielded with people who can deal with other people. This is not an impersonal, back-room, computer interface; it is face to face and the soldiers selected for this position must be screened for their communications skills and their ability to understand individual and group responses. The ability to shape the peacekeeping landscape — one populated by concerned, confused, and capricious human beings — is something any armor battalion or company commander would like to have in his back pocket.



Notes

¹U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 100-6, *Information Operations*, U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), Washington DC, 27 August 1996, and FM 3-13, *Information Operations: Doctrine, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures*, GPO, Washington DC, 9 November 2001, p. 2, superseded by FM 3-13, *Information Operations: Doctrine, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures*, Final Draft, GPO, 1 October 2002.

²FM 3-13.

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